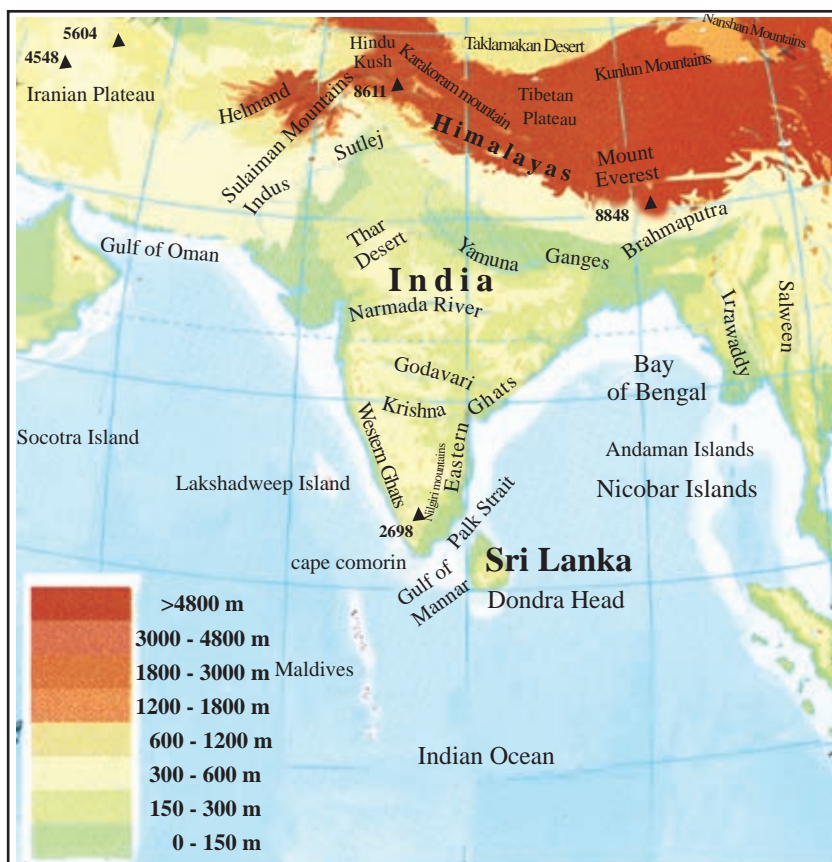# 3 South Asia

The objective of this unit is to study the location and the landscape of the South Asian Region which has diverse characteristics.

South Asia is an exceptional geographical region .This region is identified as a specific region due to its physical, human and geographical features. The Sundarban marshy land located at sea level and to Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world, located in this region are fine examples for diversity in topography. Location of extremely cold areas and extremely warm areas, Vegetation changing from dense forests to grass lands show the diversity of climate and vegetation in this region. The impact of this diversity could be seen in human activities as well. Identify the location of the South Asian region from map 3.1.

Map 3.1 : The location of the South Asian region.
Source - *Philip's Modern School Atlas*

Let us identify the absolute location of the South Asian region from the above map 3.1. The region is bounded in the North by the Himalayas, in the South by the Indian Ocean, in the East by the Bay of Bengal and in the West by the Arabian Sea.

Study map 3.2 and identify the relative location of the South Asian region. The region spreads from 0^0 (the Equator) to 38^0 North latitude in the Northern Hemisphere and 60^0 to 100^0 longitudes East. The South Asian region possesses 3% of the total land area of the Earth.

India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka are the constituent countries in the South Asian Region. Nicobar and Andaman Islands too belong to the South Asian region. Afghanistan has been awarded the membership of the SAARC, but geographically it belongs to Central Asia.

Fig. 3.2 - The absolute location of the South Asian Region
Source- *Philip's Modern School Atlas*

Fig. 3.3 - South Asian countries and the capital cities

This region is located to the North of the equator and has a tropical climate. Some South Asian countries have a coastal belt while Nepal and Bhutan are landlocked.

> ✓ **Activity**
>
> 1. State two reasons that have made South Asia geographically exceptional region ?
> 2. A. Trace a map of South Asia. Mark and name the South Asian Countries
> 3. B. On the map mark and name the capital cities of South Asian countries.
>
>   C. Name four countries on the boundary of the South Asian region.
>
>   D. What is the largest country located in this region?

Landscape of the South Asian Region

We observe a diverse physical and human landscapes in the South Asian region. When we study the different landscape located here, they could be divided into 6 categories based on specific features of them.

> A landscape means the physical environment in a certain area and the total landscape created on it as a result of human activities.
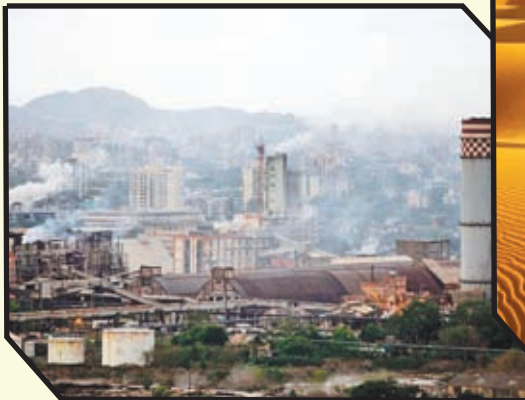
I. Mountain landscape

II. Valley landscape

III. Coastal landscape

IV. Rural landscape

V. Industrial and urban landscape

VI. Desert landscape

Fig. 3.1 - Different landscapes in South Asian region

Mountain landscape

Except Maldives, all the other countries in the South Asian region have features related to the mountain landscape. Mountain ranges with different heights and various landscapes can be seen in countries like India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

    India   - The Himalayan mountain range

    Pakistan   - The Hindu Kush and Sulaiman Ranges

    Sri Lanka - the Central hills

The main objective of this unit is to study the mountain landscape in the Himalayan range.

Map 3.4 - Himalayan Mountain Range
Source - *Philip's Modern School Atlas*
For Free Distribution

The Himalayas has different physical features of a mountain landscape. It also has a human landscape specially adapted to the physical landscape.

Kunlunshan and Himalayas together form the Great Himalayan Range. The Himalaya Mountain is very important in this mountain landscape. There are mountains, spurs, deep gorges, passes, highlands, plateaus and gaps in this area. The height of the Himalayas is around 8000 meters from the mean sea level and it is spread about 2500km in length. Out of the 14 highest peaks in the world, 9 peaks are located in the Himalayan range.

Different climates ranging from the Polar climate to the tropical climate can be seen on the Himalayas. Temperature decreases along with the increasing altitude. In the lands with low altitude the humidity is high. The region has snow capped peaks like the Everest and warm climate in the Terai valley in Nepal. A dry climatic condition can be found in areas surrounded by mountain ranges. A wide range of animal and plant species can also be identified.

Several Mongoloid tribal groups, such as Bhutia, Khasa, Darad, Lepcha and Sherpas live in the Himalayas. Different religions and cultures can be seen in this mountain landscape. Human activities and recreational activities which are specific to this snowy mountainous landscape such as Mountaineering, skiing and tourism are quite prominent. Physical features of the bodies and lifestyle of the inhabitants have been adapted according to the mountainous physical environment. They have flat, broad feet and strong legs that enable them to climbing up and down the hills and their arms are strong and muscularly built to carry heavy loads. Their lungs are also adapted to survive in an atmosphere with a lower percentage of oxygen.

Agriculture and livestock farming are the main human activities. Terraced cultivation in mountain slopes, cattle farming and rearing of sheep are done in hilly areas. Some people engage in the tourism industry as Tourist guides. They also trade in goods and carry heavy loads of baggage of the mountain climbers. Women engaged in occupations like weaving and spinning thread.

Fig. 3.2 - Live style in Mountainous region

Houses are built with raw materials such as stones, saw dust, clay and timber that can be found in the immediate environment. Roofs are thatched with species of grass. Houses are constructed so as to withstand relief and the climatic changes. They prefer to live in cluster settlements. Nomads in mountain regions live in temporary shelters and move from place to place.

The main crops grown here are rice, wheat, corn, green-gram, millet, and vegetables. They consume meat obtained from hunting, yams found in the forests and honey they collect. They also trade such items for money.

Activity

Complete the following table

Topographical features of the Himalayas	Ethnic Groups	Food	Occupations	Cultivated crops

Valley Landscape

A landscape which is highly different to the mountainous landscape can be seen in valleys. Some significant valley landscapes in the South Asian Region are,

- India -
  The Ganges Valley

- Pakistan -
  The Indus River Valley

- Sri Lanka
  The Mahaweli and Kelani
  River Valleys

Map 3.6 - Valley landscape of South Asia
Source - *http://files.prokerala.com/maps/india/*

Here, we focus on the landscape of the Ganges valley, the largest river valley in this region. This valley begins in the Himalayas and extends to about 2510km up to the Bay of Bengal. Different landscapes can be seen on either side of the valley. This is considered as one of the largest river plains in the world.

Fig 3.3 - The landscape of River Ganges

The upper part of this river valley belongs to mountain landscape. Physical features and human activities specific to each region can be observed in the middle and lower valley areas. Different features such as undulating lands, braided rivers, meanders, plains, flood plains, sand sheets, wide river valleys are important among the physical features.

The most common feature is undulating land and areas above 200 meters are rarely found in this valley.

Places of worship of many religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and the other religions can be found in the Ganges river valley. River Ganges is considered sacred by Hindus. People who use different languages and follow different religions here clearly enhance diversity of the cultural landscape along the river valley.

Fig. 3.4 - Cultural features in River Ganges

The main human activity of the people in this valley is agriculture. Different agricultural crops are cultivated in the rich alluvial soils throughout the river valley. Paddy, wheat, and sugar cane are significant among them. Extreme climatic conditions that prevail in the region affect the crops. Cultivation of the crops has been adapted to the prevalent environmental conditions. Crops such as cotton and sugar cane are cultivated obtaining water from deep wells in some areas.

The Central Ganges valley is famous for extensive paddy and wheat lands and a higher yield is obtained. Jute is the main crop in the lower delta region of River Ganges in Bangladesh. It is called the "Golden Fibber", which indicates its importance.

A large population lives in this region. As a result, labour can be obtained for lower wages. This has contributed for the development of the agricultural and industrial sectors. Industries are located in the cities such as Delhi, Patna, Agra, Varanasi, Kolkata, and Dhaka.

The Population density in this valley is also high. Delhi, Kanpur, Patna, Dhaka and Kolkata are such densely populated cities. There is a network of roads. Transportation of passenger and goods is mainly done by trains, buses and lorries. Many shops and shopping areas are located in the highly populated regions. If you travel from Agra to Patna you could see the diversity in this landscape.

In the overall landscape of the River Ganges, the upper river valley is covered by dense rain forests and it has a lower population. The middle course of the valley has a high population density and paddy and wheat are the main crops. The lower river valley is also highly populated and suffers from frequent floods.
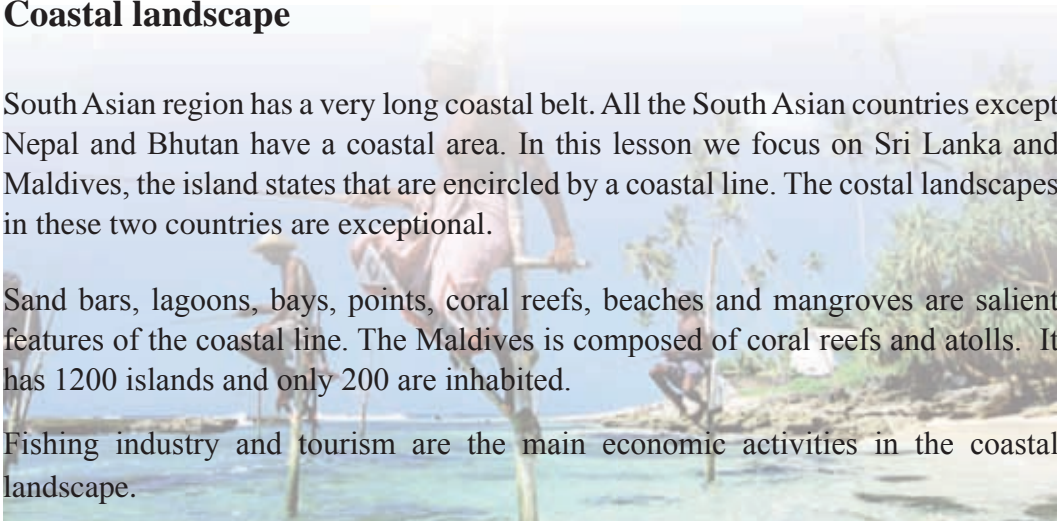
Activities

1. I. Mark and Name River Ganges on a map of South Asia.

    II. Mark and name four tributaries of the Ganges.

2. Explain with three factors how the landscape of the Ganges valley differs from the landscape of the Himalayas.

Coastal landscape

South Asian region has a very long coastal belt. All the South Asian countries except Nepal and Bhutan have a coastal area. In this lesson we focus on Sri Lanka and Maldives, the island states that are encircled by a coastal line. The costal landscapes in these two countries are exceptional.

Sand bars, lagoons, bays, points, coral reefs, beaches and mangroves are salient features of the coastal line. The Maldives is composed of coral reefs and atolls. It has 1200 islands and only 200 are inhabited.

Fishing industry and tourism are the main economic activities in the coastal landscape.

In Sri Lanka and Maldives, dented coast line and shallow sea has created a suitable environment for fisheries.

Fig. 3.5 - Tourist attraction in the costal belt

Fishing harbors have been established and development of urban and rural settlements in close proximity to the harbours can bee seen.

A new trend in the development of the tourism industry can be seen in these country. There are many islands that are allocated for tourism industry in Maldives. Favourable factors in this region for the development of tourism industry can be listed as follows.

Fig. 3.6 - Tourist attraction in the costal belt

Tourism has expanded along the coastal belt in Sri Lanka too. Southern and Eastern coastal belts are important as they attract more tourists. Many facilities are provided for the development of tourism in the other regions as well. Many job opportunities have emerged in the these areas.

- Jobs in hotels
- Sale of fancy items
- Ayurvedic centers

- Tourist guides
- Trade
- Jobs in harbours.

Many cities and towns in the costal region have been developed Colombo, Galle, Negombo, Trincomalee and Hambantota can be cited as the best examples.

There is high biodiversity in the coastal landscape. Mangroves, wetlands and marshy lands are unique ecosystems among them. Many varieties of flora, reptiles, birds and fish species can be seen in these eco systems.

Fig. 3.7 - Biodiversity of the coastal landscape

The coastal environment is a highly sensitive zone. Human activities such as, unauthorized constructions and coral mining have caused environmental problems. Coastal erosion, environmental pollution and also the increase in socially unacceptable behaviour can be given as the unfavourable results of such activities.

Rural Landscape

Rural landscape is a prominent feature in the South Asian region. The dry zone of Sri Lanka is the best example for the rural landscape. Population density is low in this landscape which is based on agriculture and fisheries. Settlements are formed according to different patterns. There are industries based on agricultural products. The dry zone is a vast region of undulating land and many rivers are also found.

Agriculture is the main economic activity in this zone. The village has been formed with the tank at the centre and paddy is the main economic crop cultivated. This region produces most of the rice in the country.

Fig. 3.8 - Paddy cultivation is done in the dry zone

Chena cultivation is done in highlands where paddy cannot be cultivated. A chena is a special feature in this landscape. Grains, vegetables and fruits are grown in chenas and villages. Livestock farming also can be seen in the dry zone. Cows are used for milking and Bulls help in paddy cultivation.

Fig. 3.9 - Chena Cultivation

The rural landscape in the South Asian Region is subjected to some changes due to development of planned cities under the irrigation projects and water supply projects. Development projects such as Gal oya, Mahaoya, Udawalawa have been launched in the dry zone.

Indigenous ("Adivasi") people too live in this region where traditions, social and cultural features remain unchanged; Numerous ancient cites such as Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa are situated in this zone.

> ✔ **Activities**
>
> 1. Name three distinct features of the dry zone landscape.
>
> 2. At present, the rural landscape is changing. Give two reasons for it.

Industrial and Urban landscape

Urban landscape has emerged in different parts of the South Asian region, related to industrial and commercial activities. Built up areas such as road networks, communication networks, residential areas and administrative centers can be seen abundantly in the urban landscape. Urban centers have emerged as a result of the concentration of people drawn to obtain such facilities. Urban population keeps on expanding when such facilities in the cities develop further. Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai (formerly known as Madras), Kolkata, Islamabad, Karachi and Colombo are important urban settlements in South Asia.

Let us select Mumbai in India to study about the industrial and urban landscape.

- Mumbai, lies on the west coast of India. It has developed as a deep natural harbor. This is India's second largest city.

- Very large population is concentrated in a very limited land area

- Growth of industries and services

- High density of houses and vertical development of buildings. ("High rise housing complex")

- Emergence of settlements of less facilities, built without a plan

- High diurnal movement of people.

Fig. 3.10 - A scene of Mumbai

World's second largest Cinema industry is also located in Mumbai. This Cinema industry which is second only to Hollywood in U.S.A, is well popular as "Bollywood" in the world.

Fig. 3.11 - various facets of an urban landscape

Flat land in this area has contributed to the growth of the city. In the past Mumbai developed as a cotton industry based market as it is situated near the black soil belt of Deccan.

Different problems pertaining to the urban landscape in South Asia can be seen in Mumbai too.

- Scarcity of land
- Traffic congestion
- Abundance of low income settlements
- Increasing street population
- Environmental pollution
- Increasing abusive behaviour

People are drawn to Mumbai due to the availability of facilities such as education and services. People are largely drawn to this city because of leisure and entertainment, service facilities from them too have been supplied.

✓ **Activities**

1. Mark and name five cities located in the South Asian region on an outline map
2. State four salient features that have immerged in the Mumbai landscape.
3. State four problems that have arisen in the urban landscape.

Desert Landscape

In this lesson we focus on the Thar desert in India.

It is situated in the state of Rajastan which lies on the Indu-Pakistan border. Thar desert is a distinct feature in the landscape of South Asia. The following facts can be considered as key feature of this landscape.

- Land with widely spread sand planes (sheets)
- High temperature
- Annual average rainfall less than 250mm
- High evaporation
- Dry winds due to high temperature
- Low moisture in soil

There is a largely distributed ground water aquifer in Thar Desert. Therefore, the roots of some plants grow deeper in to the soil to absorb water. People get water from deep wells for cultivation. People have concentrated in oases where water is available.

Fig. 3.12 - A desert landscape

Fig. 3.13 - A desert oasis landscape

Crops like sugar cane, cotton and millet are grown in these oases. Livestock farming too is a main economic activity in this region. Camels are used to transport goods. Cotton garments that are suitable for hot weather are worn here.

Due to irregular human activities the desert seems to be expanding. The houses are painted in deferent colours to suite the environment. Land loses its fertility because of livestock farming and increase in grazing of grass.
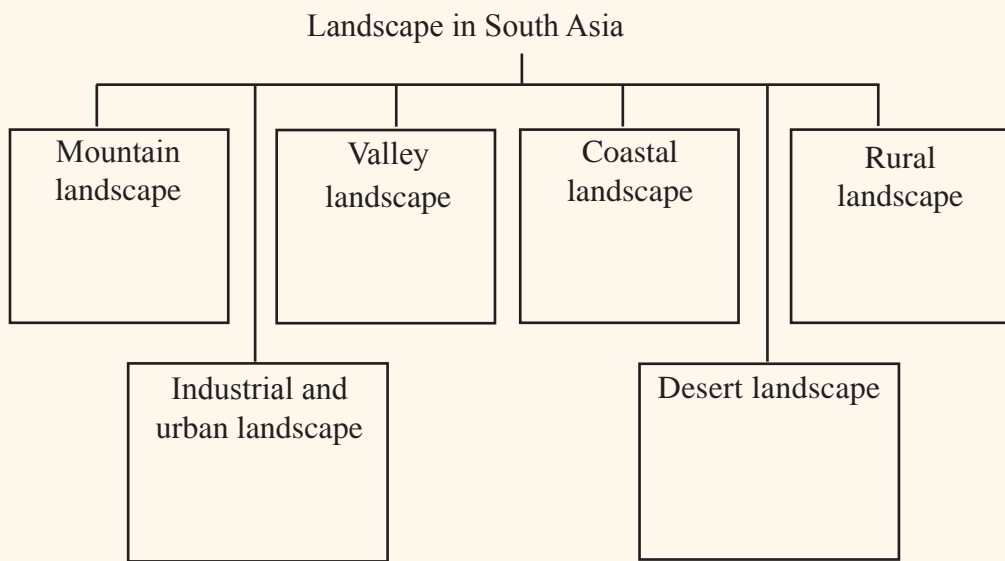
Activity

01. State 04 salient features of the desert landscape.

Assignment

1. Information about different landscapes in South Asian region is given below. Trace the following grid at the bottom and write down the information that is relevant to the landscapes.

   1. Mountains in different altitudes

   2. Flat land

   3. Oases in different parts

4. Large sand bars are distributed.

5. High population

6. Abundance of low income houses.

7. Camel is important in transportation.

8. Agriculture is done using irrigation

9. The fishing industry is important.

10. Beautiful coral reefs are present.

11. Yams, bee's honey, meat are eaten.

12. Flat lands, valleys and gorges are among the mountains.

13. From the upper course to lower course of River Ganges different crops are cultivated.

14. Tribal people.

15. Settlements with the tank at the center.

16. Cultural features has not changed

Landscape in South Asia

Mountain landscape	Valley landscape	Coastal landscape	Rural landscape

| Industrial and urban landscape | | Desert landscape | |

Source

- http://files.prokerala.com/maps/india/map-files/river-ganges-map.jpg
- *Philip's Modern School Atlas*
- http://www.freeworldmaps.net/asia/southasia/southasia-physical-map.jpg

Glossary

- Landscape — භූ දර්ශනය — { » z÷uōØÓ®
- Relative location — සාපේක්ෂ පිහිටීම — \ō°£⌀©Ä
- Absolute location — නිරපේක්ෂ පිහිටීම — uÛ¯⌀©Ä
- Physical landscape — භෞතික භූ දර්ශනය — Ö£Í wP { » z÷uōØÓ®
- Human landscape — මානුෂ භූ දර්ශනය — ©ōÛ h { » z÷uōØÓ®
- Mountain landscape — කඳුකර භූ දර්ශනය — ©⌀» ¨£ō[PōÚ { » z÷uōØÓ®
- Valley landscape — නිම්න භූ දර්ශනය — £ÒÍ zuōUS { » z÷uōØÓ®
- Undulating land — රැළි බිම — Öuōh{ » { » z÷uōØÓ®
- Braided rivers — හැඬපළු ගංගාව — ¤ßÛ¯ BÖ
- River meander — ගං දඟර — BØÖ ª ¯ō¢u°
- Flood plains — පිටාර තැනි — ÖÁÒÍ a\©öÁÎ
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